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The CAT AND FIDDLE BOOK

Other Books of Plays for Children

by LADY BELL

<i>Petit Théâtre des Enfants</i>	Twelfth Impression
<i>Nursery Comedies</i>	Eighth ,,
<i>Théâtre de la Jeunesse</i>	Twelfth ,,
<i>Fairy-Tale Plays</i>	Fifth ,,
<i>The Mother Hubbard Book</i>	

The

CAT AND FIDDLE BOOK



*Eight dramatised Nursery
Rhymes for Nursery
Performers*



by

L A D Y B E L L

and

M R S . H E R B E R T R I C H M O N D



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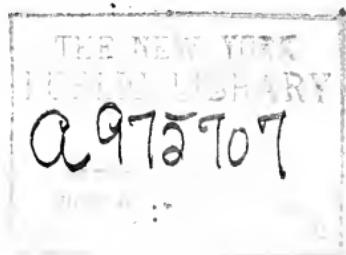
To
MY TEN GRANDCHILDREN

Eight of whom

PAULINE, GEORGE, KITTY, MARY, BRIDGET
VALENTINE, MARJORIE, AND FLORENCE

have "created" many of the parts in these playlets, and
two of whom, BILL and GEOFFREY, are still among the
audience.

F.B.
May 1922



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BY MRS. HERBERT RICHMOND

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¶ The Characters in list at the beginning of each play
are always given in the order of their appearance.

WILSON WOOD
"SILVER"
MANHATTAN

SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE "PRODUCERS" OF THESE PLAYLETS

IN every case the tune of the nursery rhyme, the dramatized version of which is about to be acted, should be played through twice on the piano before the curtain is raised : the first time without singing ; the second time the audience, of which the majority presumably will be children, should be asked to join in and sing it too, led by the performers singing it behind the scenes. At the close of the piece, when the curtain has fallen at the place indicated in the text it should (if justified by applause) be raised again, discovering the performers standing in a row. These should sing the rhyme through again to the piano accompaniment, the audience joining in as before, after which the curtain is finally lowered.

The scenery can in nearly every case be arranged by using folding screens. In one or two pieces, such as *Goosey-Goosey-Gander* and *Ride-a-Cock-horse*, it would be improved by being a little more elaborate. But even in these, if there is no artist in the family who can paint a Banbury Cross or a farmyard in the background, a large label can be hung up to show in what kind of surroundings the action is taking place. As to costume, the period of none of the plays, fortunately, is precisely known, and the performers therefore can be dressed up as they choose. Where animals' heads are required, such as the Cow, Dog, and Cat in the *Cat and the Fiddle*, the Goose and Drake in *Goosey-Gander*, and the Cock in *Ride-a-Cock-horse*, these will not be found very difficult to make out of cardboard, not too stiff, bent to the shape required and roughly painted.

In one or two of the plays there are speaking parts which can be taken by quite little children, such as the Dish and Spoon in the *Cat and the Fiddle*, the latter especially being within the grasp of the smallest performer able to speak distinctly enough for the words to be recognisable. The part of Polly in *Polly Put the Kettle On* can be played by any intelligent child of five. In *Oranges and Lemons*, *Humpty Dumpty*, and *Ride-a-Cock-horse* there are possibilities of a crowd in which any number of children available can " come on " and so take a share in the performance.

The writer ventures to suggest that the preface of a book

entitled *Fairy-Tale Plays* (Longman) contains detailed directions which may be found helpful for rehearsing with children. The great thing for the "Producers" to remember is not to cast a gloom over the proceedings by being depressed or losing their tempers when the performers still don't know their parts on the day of the performance, when their "business" at that performance is exactly opposite to that inculcated at rehearsals, and when they invent on "the night" an entirely new series of mistakes. It does not matter if they do. The audience, which will probably largely consist of the relations of the performers, will be just as pleased whatever happens, and so will every child-lover who is looking on. So will the actors, whose enjoyment is assured if they are acting and dressing up. And the spectator who does not like seeing their enjoyment does not deserve to have any himself, so we need not take him into account.

Neither the writer nor the producers of these absurd little plays, therefore, need have much fear of failure. They are spared the acute preliminary—and subsequent—agonies of those who produce plays of a larger size and a better quality than those contained in this little book.

May 1922.

FLORENCE BELL

THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE

*

S C E N E

A room in Mrs. MOOCOW'S Boarding House. A chair R.C., a settee, or another chair, up stage R. At back L.C. two ordinary folding screens about 2ft. 6in. apart, a curtain hung across the space between them. A picture of a full moon painted on a large piece of cardboard must be propped up behind the opening between the screens, so that when the curtain is drawn back the moon is seen on the horizon, i.e. its lower edge on the level of the ground.

C H A R A C T E R S

In order of their appearance

THE COW THE DOG THE CAT
 THE DISH THE SPOON

*

Cow. Dog !

Dog. Yes ?

Cow. Do you like the cat ?

Dog. No, I don't. Do you ?

Cow. Of course not.

Dog. Why *did* you have her to lodge with you ?

Cow. I really don't know. I thought it would be nice to have someone who was fond of music.

Dog. *I'm* fond of it, but not of the cat's music.

Cow. No, her music is a disappointment.

Dog. I don't care about that great lumpy fiddle of hers, either.

Cow. And she *will* accompany herself on it when she mews.

Dog. And then, she's so vain.

Cow. Yes ! She told me she could jump better than I could.

Dog. Oh, how absurd.

Cow. She says I can't climb a tree.

Dog. And can you ?

Cow. I've never tried it—I don't want to. She says *you* can't climb a tree.

Dog. Well, what then ? I can stand at the bottom of it and bark. Can she do that ?

Cow. Of course not. And I told her that if I liked I could jump over the moon.

Dog [rather incredulous]. Could you, Cow ? Could you ?

Cow. If it were near the ground.

Dog. But is it ever near the ground ?

Cow. Certainly, when it is quite low down and looks all big and red.

Dog. Oh yes, to be sure.

Cow. And then, the cat gives such a lot of trouble. She must have her dinner on a dish every day, all mixed up with a spoon.

Dog. Such a fuss ! Why can't she just have a bone on the drawing-room carpet—nothing nicer than that.

Cow. Or some grass in the field—so simple ? The Dish and the Spoon don't like having to come down from the dresser so often. They like being quiet. [Mewing heard.] Not much chance of being quiet with a cat who practises all day.

1. THE CAT AND THE FIDDLE.

Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jump'd over the moon the
 little dog laughed to see such sport, and the dish ran away with the spoon.

[Enter CAT L., mewing. She is carrying a 'cello or a violin, preferably the former. She sits down on chair R.C. and pretends to tune her instrument, mewing the note and turning the pegs. If a grown-up who can play the tune on one of these instruments is not available for the part of the cat, the child who acts it can be taught, while mewing the tune through after tuning, to draw the bow across the open D string and A string on first beat, provided the instrument is not too precious for such handling.

Cow. May I ask, Cat—

CAT. Don't interrupt, please, when I'm practising. I'm going to mew at a concert to-night. [Goes on.

[*The Cow and the Dog join in, mooing and barking.*

CAT [*at end of tune*]. What are you doing ?

Cow. We're joining in the chorus.

CAT. There isn't a chorus to that song.

DOG. There was that time.

CAT. Well, don't let it happen again. I shan't practise any more for the present.

DOG. That's a comfort.

CAT. I want my dinner.

Cow [*calls off*]. Dish ! Spoon ! Bring the Cat's dinner.

Enter DISH and SPOON R.

DISH and SPOON. If you please, we wish to give notice.

Cow. Notice ! Why ?

DISH. There is too much to do here. We don't like having to bring in so many meals for the Cat.

SPOON. No, we don't.

CAT. What impertinence !

DOG. Well, then, I'll give notice too as a lodger. I don't like living under the same roof as the Cat.

Cow. Do you hear, Cat ? You are breaking up my establishment. I must ask you to leave this day week.

CAT. Certainly not. I've got my rooms by the year, remember.

DOG. Oh dear. Bow, wow, wow.

CAT. May I ask why you don't like me ?

DOG. I don't like your ways. You wag your tail when you're angry instead of wagging it when you're pleased.

CAT. It is a silly doggish plan to wag it when you're pleased. How can people know what you mean ?

Cow. And you're so vain.

CAT. What about you ? You said you could jump over the moon.

Cow. I said I could if I liked. But I don't like.

CAT. I'll bet you can't jump over the moon, whether you like it or not.

Cow. I never bet.

CAT. Then we won't bet for money. But I'll bet you you can't jump over the moon, and if you can, then I'll have lost my bet, and I'll go away as you ask ; but if you can't, then I'll stay here as long as I please.

DOG [*who has slyly pulled aside the curtain—aside to Cow*]. Say yes, the moon's quite low.

COW [*to CAT*]. All right, I'll take your bet.

DOG. And I'll be umpire.

CAT. Fair play, mind.

DOG. Dogs are always honest, they are not like cats.

CAT. And cats are always polite. They are not like dogs.

DOG. Now listen, Cat. If the Cow jumps so high that we can see the moon beneath her, that shall be counted jumping over the moon.

CAT. All right, then, draw the curtain so that we can see the moon. [*DISH draws the curtain—moon seen on the horizon*.

DOG. Now then. One, two, three.

[*Cow jumps. Moon seen under her as she jumps.*

DOG. Ha, ha, ha ! It makes me laugh to see such sport. Cow, you have won. We saw the moon under you as you jumped.

DISH and SPOON. Yes, we did !

DOG [*to CAT*]. You have lost your bet.

CAT. I'm very glad to go away from you all. I don't like those lumpy-jumpy ways.

ALL. We're glad too, so we're all satisfied !

[*Exit CAT, mewing and fiddling.*

DISH. Come along, Spoon. I'll run away with you into the fields.

COW. Oh, what fun ! we'll all elope together. Come on, Dog !

[*They all dance round, and finally out. Length of dance ad lib., but they must go round twice at least. As they go from one side of the stage to the other, CAT comes in, in the contrary direction, meeting them. She carries her 'cello and stick in one hand, and in the other a small suit case. She tosses her head scornfully at the others and marches out.*

CURTAIN

LUCY LOCKET

*

CHARACTERS

MRS. LOCKET

LUCY, her daughter

KITTY FISHER, her niece

** Produced at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, during the Christmas season of 1921, with the following cast :

Mrs. Locket: SYBIL THORNDIKE

Lucy Locket: MARY CASSON

Kitty Fisher: ANN CASSON

SCENE

MRS. LOCKET'S Drawing Room. Small table L. with workbox, etc., on it. R.C. armchair L. of table. L.C. higher chair. MRS. LOCKET on armchair, sewing ; LUCY on higher chair, swinging her legs.

*

MRS. L. Oh dear, I never thought I should have such a careless child.

LUCY. Why didn't you think so, mother ?

MRS. L. Because I was so very tidy myself when I was a little girl—just like your Cousin Kitty. Oh, why are you not like her !

LUCY. I do think Kitty is so boring.

MRS. L. My dear child ! How wrong to say such a thing of your cousin.

LUCY. But, mother, you always say I'm to tell the truth. So as she is boring, I must say so.

MRS. L. It's wrong to be bored by people who are good. Kitty is so tidy, so careful about everything : so unlike you. You're so heedless I can't even send you to the village shop for me.

LUCY. Oh, mother, do let me go to the shop for you. I'm sure I could.

MRS. L. I do want two pennorth of pepper, but I can't trust you to get it. I'm sure you would lose the pennies.

LUCY. No, no. I would hold them tightly in my hand. You see, I haven't a pocket in this frock. That's one reason why I lose things.

MRS. L. That is true, and I have made you a nice little pocket to tie on, in hopes it will make you more careful.

LUCY. Oh, mother, what a darling pocket, and what a pretty binding !

MRS. L. Yes, I've just sewn it on.

[*LUCY ties it on round her waist.*

LUCY. Do give me the two pennies, and I'll put them into the pocket.

MRS. L. Take care that bow doesn't slip. You've tied it very loosely. Oh, here is your cousin Kitty.

Enter KITTY

KITTY. Good morning, Aunt Jane.

MRS. L. Good morning, my child, and how is my good little girl this morning?

KITTY. Very well, thank you, aunt, and I feel very happy, too.

LUCY. So do I. [*Looking proudly at her pocket.*

KITTY. Ah, but not for the same reason, I fear. I feel happy because I am so very good. I'm so tidy and careful, and I never forget anything.

LUCY. How dull that must be!

MRS. L. Oh, my dear Lucy. Don't say that! Ask Kitty to tell you how she does it, while I go and write my letters.

[*Goes out.*

LUCY. No, don't tell me anything about it, Kitty. Look at my new pocket.

KITTY. I hope you won't lose it. I never lose anything.

LUCY. Oh, then, you do miss a lot of excitement! When I'm going out I have to rush about looking for my things, and it is so thrilling when I see my shoe far back under the bed, or my handkerchief in the coal-scuttle.

KITTY. Oh, Lucy, how much better it would be if your shoes were tidily side by side! You shock me. I always put my things where they ought to be, and then I find them again at once.

LUCY. Well, I wish you wouldn't, then, and put it into my mother's head. She's always wanting me to do the same.

KITTY. You must try, Lucy. Try as hard as you can, and perhaps some day you will grow up like me.

LUCY. I hope I shan't. [*Makes a face at her.*

KITTY. Oh, how distressing! I never make a face.

LUCY. Now I'm going out to shop for mother.

[*Jumps round room and goes out.*

KITTY [*looking after her*]. Oh, poor girl, how I pity her ! What is that I see on the ground over there ? [Goes out and brings in LUCY's pocket.] Why, I believe this is Lucy's pocket ! Dear, dear, how careless of her ! What a good thing I was there ready to pick it up. [Feels in bag.] Nothing in it. Ha ! there's something. No, it's only the binding round it. Dear, dear, she has lost the money too ! I must go and find my aunt and take it to her.

[Enter MRS. L., KITTY ostentatiously holding bag so that MRS. L. may see it.]

MRS. L. What's that you have, Kitty ?

KITTY [*holding it up*]. It's Lucy's pocket.

MRS. L. What ! Lucy's pocket, that I made her this morning ? What are you doing with it, Kitty ?

KITTY. I'm sorry to say, Aunt Jane, that Lucy dropped it, and as I happened to be looking round me to see if I could be useful in any way I saw it and picked it up.

MRS. L. And what about the pence that were in it ?

KITTY. They are not there. I'm very sorry, as I know people ought to be so careful of money. I always am.

[*Loud boo-hooing heard outside. Enter LUCY.*

LUCY. I've lost my pocket ! I've lost my pocket !

MRS. L. Oh, you careless girl ! you may well cry. Luckily for you, Kitty Fisher found it.

LUCY. Oh, Kitty, did you ? Oh, I am so glad. Give it to me quickly !

KITTY [*holding it back*]. Don't you think, Aunt Jane, I had better have it ? I am so careful of my things.

LUCY [*angry*]. No, you shan't. You shan't have my nice pocket. [Goes to her and drags it away. They fight.]

MRS. L. You are not to fight. That is very wrong.

KITTY. Very wrong. I forgot myself, I am afraid.

MRS. L. Where are the pence you had in the pocket, Lucy ? [LUCY boo-hoos again.]

LUCY. Oh, mother, it must have come untied when I

jumped about. I'm so dreadfully sorry. I shall never be happy again.

KITTY. No, of course you can't feel happy as I do.

LUCY. Mother, do let me try once more; I really will be good.

MRS. L. Are you sure, Lucy? Will you really try?

LUCY. Yes, yes, I promise. I'll be like a little girl in a book, who changes all of a sudden, and never does it again.

MRS. L. Very well, then, I'll trust you with it once more.

2. LUCY LOCKET.

The musical score consists of two staves of music in 2/4 time, key of G major. The top staff is for the treble clef and the bottom staff is for the bass clef. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Lucy Locket lost her pocket
Kitty Fisher found it.

Ne'er a penny was there in it
save the binding round it.

KITTY. I'm a little surprised at you, aunt.

LUCY. And you'll never tell me I'm to be as good as Kitty?

MRS. L. No, because you will be just as good without my telling you.

KITTY. Good-bye then, aunt, I don't care to stay here if I'm of no use in setting an example to Lucy.

LUCY. I can do without your example, thank you.

KITTY. We shall see. But next time Lucy Locket loses her pocket Kitty Fisher will not find it.

[They all sing "Lucy Locket," the curtain coming down on the last line.]

POLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON

*

CHARACTERS

MRS. SMILER
POLLY

MRS. BROWN
MRS. CRABSTICK

MRS. JENNINGS
SUKEY

SCENE

MRS. SMILER'S Cottage. A table C. half way up stage, four chairs round it arranged almost in a semi-circle, so that there is no one with back to audience. R. a stove on which to put kettle, etc. Dresser or table at back with cups and saucers, etc., on it.

*

MRS. S. Polly ! Polly !

POLLY [outside]. Yes, ma'am.

[Enter POLLY. *She is very small.*

MRS. S. Now, Polly, this afternoon you must be my little maid.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. Do you think I can trust you ?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. You see, Sukey hasn't come in yet, and some people are coming to tea, so you must put the kettle on to boil, and make the tea when they come.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. Do you think you can ?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. Do you know how to make the tea ?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. How do you make it ?

POLLY. With water, ma'am.

MRS. S. Anything else ?

POLLY. No, ma'am.

MRS. S. Oh, Polly ! you are hopeless.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. What do you make the tea with, stupid ?

POLLY. The kettle, ma'am.

MRS. S. And what else ?

POLLY. The teapot, ma'am.

MRS. S. And what inside the teapot ?

POLLY [thinks a minute, then triumphantly]. Water, ma'am.

MRS. S. Anything else ?

POLLY. Tea, ma'am !

MRS. S. Of course. Now mind you don't forget, and have everything ready, as the party will be here in a minute : and I'll go and put on my best cap. [Exit.

POLLY [stands for a minute with the kettle in her hands, trying to remember]. Let me see . . . Oh yes, the tea.

[She puts many spoonfuls of tea into the kettle, and then water, shakes the kettle to see if there's water in it, pours some water into the teapot ; then, as she is standing with the kettle in her hand, Mrs. S. comes in quickly with a gorgeous cap on.

MRS. S. I see them coming across the green ! Quick, Polly, put the kettle on, we'll all have tea. [A knock at the door. Mrs. S. goes and opens it.] Good afternoon, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Jennings, Mrs. Crabstick !

MRS. J. [brightly]. Good afternoon to you, I'm sure.

MRS. B. [composed]. Good afternoon, Mrs. Smiler.

MRS. C. [coldly]. Afternoon.

MRS. J. [brightly]. Good afternoon, Mrs. Smiler, and hoping you keep well.

MRS. S. Yes, thank you. I have my worries, of course, like the rest of us.

MRS. C. [grimly]. We all have. It's a weary world.

MRS. J. Oh, Mrs. Crabstick, cheer up, just when we've come to such a nice tea-party.

MRS. C. I depend on my tea.

MRS. B. Oh, of course ; so do I.

MRS. J. We all do.

MRS. S. Well, I hope you'll get it as you like it to-day.

MRS. C. One doesn't get what one's used to out of their own house, but if you come out to tea one must make the best of it.

MRS. J. [to MRS. S.]. And your little maid, Sukey, makes such good tea.

MRS. S. Yes, she does, but to-day she's out. I'm afraid she must have had a tumble off her bicycle.

MRS. C. Bicycle indeed ! In my young days feet were good enough.

MRS. J. [laughing]. Quite true, Mrs. Crabstick. If we had been meant to go on bicycles we should be born with wheels instead of legs.

MRS. B. Ah, it's a weary world.

MRS. S. Oh dear me, Mrs. Crabstick, don't be so gloomy. I've got another little maid to take Sukey's place this afternoon. You'll get your tea all the same. The kettle's boiling now. Polly, is everything ready ?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

[*She brings in the teapot, the guests sit round the table, Mrs. S. at the head of it. Kettle on fire.*]

MRS. S. Now, I'll help you first, Mrs. Crabstick. I know you depend so much on your tea.

[*Pours out : water only comes out of the pot.*]

MRS. S. Oh !

MRS. J. There's only water in the teapot.

MRS. B. There's no tea in it.

MRS. S. Oh dear, what can have happened ? Polly !

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. There's no tea in the teapot.

POLLY. No, ma'am.

MRS. S. But I told you to put in some tea, and I gave you the tea-caddy.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MRS. S. Then what did you do with the tea ?

POLLY. Put it into the kettle, ma'am.

MRS. S. Into the kettle ! Give me the kettle at once.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

[*MRS. S. pours out ; an inky fluid comes out of the spout.**]

MRS. S. Oh ! what a way of making tea !

MRS. C. You'll excuse me if I go away, Mrs. Smiler. I'm so afraid of being taken worse if I stay here after what has happened.

THE OTHERS. And we really feel we had better do the same. Good afternoon, Mrs. Smiler.

[*They all get up and go towards the door. The door is thrown violently open and SUKEY rushes in.*]

MRS. S. Oh, Sukey ! There you are at last.

ALL THE GUESTS [*looking at her*]. At last !

SUKEY. I'm so sorry, ma'am ; I fell off my bicycle, and it's broken.

* For this brew plenty of blacking should be mixed with water ; it should be shaken up the last thing to make sure that the blacking has not sunk to the bottom.

MRS. C. [solemnly]. What did I say !

SUKEY. I did so want to be here to make the tea.

MRS. S. You had better have been. Look !

[Pours out of the kettle some of the black liquid.]

3. POLLY PUT THE KETTLE ON.

Polly put the kettle on, Polly put the kettle on, Polly put the

kettle on, we'll all have tea. Sukey take it off again, Sukey take it

off again, Sukey take it off again, they've all gone a - way.

SUKEY. Oh dear ! I'll get another. [Opens cupboard, gets out another kettle.] I'll soon make it boil.

[Puts water into kettle and puts it on the fire.]

MRS. B. I don't think we'll wait for any more tea-makings, thank you. Good afternoon.

ALL. Good afternoon.

[They all go out.]

MRS. S. Oh dear ! Oh dear ! My tea-party has not been a success. Sukey, take it off again, they've all gone away.

[MRS. S., SUKEY, and POLLY all sing together,
"Sukey, take it off again, they've all gone away !"]

QUICK CURTAIN

GOOSEY-GANDER

*

CHARACTERS

THE GANDER
THE DRAKE

THE BAILIFF
FARMER GILES

THE COUNTESS
MELISSA

The GANDER and the DRAKE have a language of their own which they are supposed to use when speaking to one another, but the parts are here written in ordinary language to be understood by the audience. They understand what the human beings say, but cannot join in conversation with them.

SCENE I

A road, palings at back, parallel to front of stage, with gate supposed to be leading into farmyard. Enter GANDER R. Walks rapidly to the centre of the stage, then suddenly stops as if bewildered, looks on ground in every direction.

*

GANDER. Why, it's gone ! [Enter DRAKE L.

DRAKE. Good morning, Gander.

GANDER. Good morning's all very well, but where is it ?

DRAKE. What ? Where ? Which ?

GANDER. Really, Drake, you're the stupidest bird. You're nearly as stupid as my wife, and I never saw such a goose as she is. Don't you see what I'm looking for ? Don't you see what's gone ?

DRAKE. Oh, you don't mean—what ! the puddle ! Gone !

GANDER. Of course. Only yesterday morning there was a nice large hole just in the middle of the road, and a large puddle in it.

DRAKE. So there was. So convenient and delightful.

GANDER. Yes, you were always sure of finding a puddle there, however dry the rest of the road was.

DRAKE. But where has it gone to ? Who can have taken it ?

GANDER. Oh, I know quite well—it's that bailiff, of course. And I know why he did it, too. It was just to spite me, as he knew that was my favourite walk.

DRAKE. I've thought for a long time he had a grudge against you.

GANDER. Yes, ever since the day that I flapped two of his horrid little children into the pond.

DRAKE. Serve them right. It will teach them to come rushing about the farmyard as if it belonged to them.

GANDER. And they're so rude, too. Just imagine, the other

day one of them said to me, " Hallo, goosey-poosey " ! I ask you, is that the way to speak to a gander ?

DRAKE. Monstrous !

GANDER. I sometimes feel inclined to go up to the castle and complain to the Countess.

DRAKE. Well, why don't you ? It's not far across the fields.

GANDER. Oh yes, I know the way to the castle gates, but when I got inside it I should be wandering upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber, and not know where I was. But still, something must be done about that bailiff.

DRAKE. And the way he comes prancing along on his dapple-grey pony, as if no one could ride a spirited animal but himself !

GANDER. Look, here he comes !

[The BAILIFF rides in on hobby horse and curvets and prances round on stage, and rides into middle where GANDER and DRAKE are standing.]

BAILIFF. Now then, you birds ! Get out of the way, can't you ?

[He hits at them with his stick. The GANDER and DRAKE flap their wings, hiss and quack, and scurry out of the way. BAILIFF hitches his horse to the gate by the bridle and walks into the middle of the road, bends down, and looks at where the hole had been.]

GANDER [to DRAKE]. There now, you see. I told you he did it.

[FARMER GILES comes slowly out and leans over gate at back C.]

BAILIFF *[still in road]*. Morning, Farmer Giles.

FARMER GILES *[pipe in mouth, nods sideways]*. Morning.

BAILIFF. I came to have a look at the road. I'm glad to see that the hole's quite gone.

GANDER *[to DRAKE]*. Listen to him, glorying in it !

FARMER GILES. Oh ay, they had a grand mending of it. They filled it and rolled it, and they filled it and they rolled it, and they filled it and they rolled it, and then, they filled it and they rolled it again.

BAILIFF. And they've made a good job of it, too.

GANDER *[to DRAKE]*. Let's show him we don't like it.

[They stand in the middle of the road and flap and hiss and quack.]

BAILIFF. Those birds are intolerable.

FARMER GILES [smiling]. I expect they're looking for their puddle, poor things. They was always splashing about in it.

BAILIFF. Then they'll have to do without it, that's all. [GANDER comes up near him and flaps at him. BAILIFF unties hobby horse.] That's a vicious gander of yours, Farmer Giles. He nearly drowned my children the other day. It really isn't safe.

FARMER GILES. Ah, the little uns was teasing of him, I daresay. It'll do them no harm to be learned how to behave in the farmyard.

BAILIFF [mounting his horse]. Well, he had better not do it again.

[Shakes his stick at GANDER. GANDER rushes at him.

They fight. DRAKE and GANDER peck and flap.

BAILIFF beats them with his stick. GANDER gets hold of his coat with his beak. BAILIFF beats him off. FARMER GILES looks on, smoking and smiling.

BAILIFF. My best coat! Look! this is intolerable. I shall go straight to the castle and complain to her ladyship.

[Gallops off R.

FARMER GILES [to GANDER]. Look here, old boy, you must behave yourself, mind, or you'll get into trouble.

[Goes back through gate and off L.

GANDER. Quick, we must follow that old wretch to the castle and hear what he's saying. Come on, Drakey. How fast can you waddle?

DRAKE. Oh, a good pace. I can do a mile an hour easy.

GANDER. Capital. Come along then.

[They waddle out R.

CURTAIN

*

SCENE II

The COUNTESS'S Boudoir. A table R. slanting to the audience with ornamental mirror standing on it. A door at back, L.C. Door in R.H. corner, back labelled "Secret staircase to dungeon." The COUNTESS sitting at the table looking at herself in the mirror. MELISSA, her maid, standing, with a hat in her hand trimmed with flowers.

*

COUNTESS. Now, Melissa, give me my garden hat, please. I feel inclined to go down to the farm.

MELISSA [*bringing the hat*]. Your ladyship is so fond of the farm.

COUNTESS. Indeed I am, and of the live stock there. I should like to direct it all myself, but I don't think the bailiff would like it. He is rather tiresome sometimes.

MELISSA. Still, my lady, he is a most honest man, and his accounts, as your ladyship always says, are a marvel.

COUNTESS. Oh yes, in many ways he is excellent, I know, and yet he is not popular with the poultry—no doubt of that.

MELISSA. That is true. He doesn't seem to get on with the gander.

COUNTESS. Such a pity. I like the gander myself—he is always very civil to me.

MELISSA [*laughing*]. Really, my lady, he seems such a sensible bird, sometimes you would really think he understood what you say. [*They both laugh*. *A knock at the door*.

COUNTESS. Melissa! [Points to door.]

[MELISSA opens the door. The BAILIFF is seen.

BAILIFF. May I enter, madam?

MELISSA. Come in, Master Bailiff.

Enter BAILIFF.

COUNTESS. Good day, Master Bailiff.

BAILIFF [*agitated*]. I hope I do not intrude on your ladyship, but I come on a pressing matter—

COUNTESS. What is it?

BAILIFF. My coat, madam.

COUNTESS. WHAT!

BAILIFF. I beg your ladyship to look at it—there is a large tear in it.

COUNTESS. A somewhat unseemly sight—I should have thought you would have begged me not to look at it.

BAILIFF. But it is your gander, my lady.

COUNTESS. What is my gander?

BAILIFF. My coat.

COUNTESS. Your coat is my gander, Bailiff? You are talking wildly.

BAILIFF. It is no wonder, madam. It was the Gander did

it. [*Showing tear on coat.*] I have been attacked by that vicious bird—

COUNTESS. And wounded in the coat tails !

[COUNTESS and MELISSA laugh.]

BAILIFF. It does not seem a laughing matter to me, your ladyship. Something must be done.

COUNTESS. With a needle and thread. There, I quite agree with you.

BAILIFF. No, madam—with a big stick. Something must be done to make the Gander behave better.

COUNTESS. I am sorry you don't like the Gander, Bailiff. I always find him very pleasant.

BAILIFF. I regret that your ladyship is inclined to make such a companion of him. He really seems to consider he is on an equality with your ladyship.

COUNTESS. On an equality with me ! You are impertinent, sir. No one is on an equality with me in this castle. But I have a warm regard for the Gander, and I consider that you have insulted us both by your complaints. [A noise at the door.] Melissa !

[MELISSA hastens to open the door. The GANDER and DRAKE are seen in the doorway. They both bow.]

MELISSA. Oh !

COUNTESS. Come in, both of you.

BAILIFF. What, even here ! Miserable birds, how dare you !

[GANDER and DRAKE hiss and squawk.]

COUNTESS. You forget yourself, Bailiff. This is not your house. I beg that you will apologise at once for your rudeness to us all. Down on your knees at once and pray for forgiveness.

BAILIFF. I am willing to apologise to you, madam, but not to the Gander, and I will not go on my knees, even to your ladyship.

COUNTESS. Do you hear that, Gander ? There stands an old man—

BAILIFF. Old man, madam ?

COUNTESS. Yes, old, compared to the Gander—who will

not say his prayers. Take him by the left leg and throw him downstairs.

[*Fight. The BAILIFF hits the GANDER and DRAKE with his stick. They flap and peck. MELISSA opens the door of the secret staircase. The BAILIFF falls with his legs through the doorway. They drag him out and a great noise of tumbling is heard. Then they come in again.*]

4. GOOSEY GANDER.

Goosey Goosey Gander, whither shall we wander? Upstairs and
 downstairs, in my lady's chamber. There I saw an old man who
 wouldn't say his prayers, take him by the left leg and throw him downstairs.

COUNTESS. Thank you, Gander. Now we will go for a nice walk and you shall choose it. You shall take me to your favourite place.

[*The GANDER and DRAKE both shake their heads sadly.*

COUNTESS. What is it? Something wrong? Dear me, I wish you could speak. Lead the way then. Goosey Goosey Gander, whither shall we wander? [Walk round with steps and out.

CURTAIN

ORANGES AND LEMONS

*

CHARACTERS

MRS. CARR
KITTY, *her daughter*
SHOREDITCH BOY

ST. MARTIN'S BOY
OLD BAILEY BOY
STEPNEY BOY

BOW BOY
NEIGHBOURS

SCENE

A STREET. MRS. CARR, with a small basket in her hand in which are two oranges and two lemons, is walking along the street to her house, holding her little daughter KITTY by the hand. They are supposed to have just arrived at her house door.

*

MRS. C. There now, here we are at home again, and I'll take these in and make a nice pot of jam with them. I got them very cheap.

KITTY. How much were they?

MRS. C. Twopence each orange, and twopence and three farthings each lemon.

[Handbells heard ringing.]

KITTY. Mother, why are the bells ringing?

MRS. C. Because it is Bellringers' Day, when everyone who likes may ring a bell in the streets if he calls out the name of his parish and puts a penny into the parish poor box.

KITTY. Oh, I should like to do that. What's our parish?

MRS. C. St. Clement's.

KITTY. And I could ring my little bell that I got off the Christmas tree.

MRS. C. But have you a penny for the poor box?

KITTY *[coaxingly]*. You give me one, mammy darling.

MRS. C. *[smiling]*. I'm afraid I haven't one to spare. I spent my pennies on these.

KITTY *[looking at the oranges and lemons in basket]*. Do let me sell them again and have some pennies!

MRS. C. What about the jam then?

KITTY. Oh, I'd much rather have the pennies for the poor box, so that I could ring my bell too.

MRS. C. Well, you may try to sell them if you like.

KITTY. Oh, mammy darling, you *are* kind. I'll run in and get my bell.

[Rushes in to get it. While she is inside MRS. CARR

arranges the oranges and lemons in the basket, etc.
 KITTY comes out with the bell.

MRS. C. [giving her the basket, smiling]. I'm spoiling you, mind.

KITTY. It is nice to be spoilt. Now you go indoors, mother, and I'll be a real person all by myself.

[MRS. C. smiles, kisses her, and goes in. KITTY, alone, walks up and down calling "St Clement's! St. Clement's! St. Clement's!" Enter ST. MARTIN'S BOY, ringing his bell.

ST. M. St. Martin's! St. Martin's!

[Looks at KITTY's basket.

KITTY [sings to tune, ringing bell]. Oranges and lemons, says the Bells of St. Clement's!

ST. M. Jolly good they look.

KITTY. Buy one?

ST. M. Yes, if they're not too dear. How much are they?

KITTY. Two pennies for each orange, and two pennies and three farthings for each lemon.

ST. M. All right, I'll have one of each. Now, twopence for this, you say, and twopence three farthings for this. Can you reckon up how much that is?

KITTY. No—you must.

ST. M. Girls are silly. That makes fourpence three-farthings. Now, here's a sixpence, and you must give me five farthings change.

[Sings] "You owe me five farthings, says the bells of St. Martin's."

KITTY. Oh dear, I've got no farthings, no change, no nothing.

ST. M. Then you'll have no sixpence as well, that's all. And I'll have no oranges and lemons—and no nothing.

KITTY. Oh dear, what a pity!

[Enter SHOREDITCH BOY, ringing bell.

SHOREDITCH. Shoreditch! Shoreditch! Hallo, those look good. Look here, little girl, sell me one. [Feels in his pocket.] No, my pocket's empty.

[Enter OLD BAILEY BOY, ringing bell.

OLD BAILEY. Old Bailey ! Old Bailey ! Jolly things you've got there, young person.

KITTY. *Do* buy one.

SHOREDITCH. *I* want to buy one if someone will lend me the money.

OLD BAILEY. Here, I've got some money. How much do you want ?

SHOREDITCH. Twopence.

OLD BAILEY. Here you are then.

SHOREDITCH. Hooray ! [Takes orange.] There, little girl. [Gives her two pennies.]

KITTY. Oh, that is nice !

OLD BAILEY [to SHOREDITCH]. But when will you pay me ? [Sings] "When will you pay me ? says the bell of Old Bailey."

SHOREDITCH [sings, smiling]. "When I grow rich, says the bell of Shoreditch."

OLD BAILEY. That's all very well, but it's a long time to wait. You put back that orange and give me back the pennies.

[They begin fighting, their bells making a noise as they do so. Enter STEPNEY and BOW, ringing bells, STEPNEY in front.]

STEPNEY. Stepney !

BOW. And Bow !

STEPNEY. Stepney !

BOW. And Bow ! [They look at the boys fighting.]

BOW. What's all this about ?

OLD BAILEY. I've lent this Shoreditch boy twopence, and he says he'll pay me when he grows rich.

STEPNEY [to SHOREDITCH, sings]. "When will that be ? says the bell of Stepney."

[SHOREDITCH shakes his head and laughs.]

BOW [in a deep voice, sings]. "I'm sure I don't know, says the big bell of Bow."

OLD BAILEY. Don't know, indeed !

BOW. Well, don't quarrel on Bellringers' Day. Let's make a great noise and disturb the neighbours, that's much more amusing. Come on now, let's each shout something.

5. ORANGES AND LEMONS.

Oranges and lemons, says the bells of St. Clements. You owe me five farthings, says the
 bells of St. Martins, When will you pay me? says the bells of Old Bailey.

When I grow rich, says the bells of Shoreditch. When will that be? says the bells of Stepney, I'm
 sure I don't know, says the big bell of Bow faster Here comes a candle to
 light you to bed—and here comes a chopper to chop off your head!

[Each one sings a line, ringing the bell on the first beat of the bar.]

KITTY. Oranges and lemons, says the bell of St. Clement's.

ST. M. You owe me five farthings, says the bell of St. Martin's.

OLD BAILEY. When will you pay me ? says the bell of Old Bailey.

SHOREDITCH. When I grow rich, says the bell of Shoreditch.

STEPNEY. When will that be ? says the bell of Stepney.

BOW. I'm sure I don't know, says the big bell of Bow. Capital. Now, all together, about the chopper.

[All sing very loud.]

Here comes a candle to light you to bed,
And here comes a chopper to chop off your head.

NEIGHBOURS. Oh, what a noise !

BOW. It's Bellringers' Day, ma'am. We may make as much noise as we like. Now then, all together.

[They stand in a row and sing the song straight through. Then they either march round in single file without singing, but ringing their bells, while the tune is played on the piano, or else dance. In either case the neighbours may join in.]

CURTAIN

RIDE A COCK-HORSE

*

SCENE I

TIMMY and JIMMY in separate beds, feet to audience, as the curtain goes up. TIM sits up cautiously.

*

TIM. Jim, are you asleep ?

JIM [*sitting up and laughing*]. Yes, sound, are you ?

TIM. Yes. I *do* think it's so boring being in bed, don't you ?

JIM. Horrid. I hate being asleep.

TIM. But it's so difficult to keep awake sometimes, even if one has a book to look at.

JIM. I can't think why Nurse doesn't like us to bring our book to bed. This is just the time to have it. It gives one nice dreams. [*He takes up book from the ground by his bed.*] Look, I've got mine.

TIM. It would be safer to wait till she's been.

JIM [*putting it under pillow*]. Perhaps it would.

TIM. I *do* like it when Nurse looks in very softly and then says to Mother outside, "They're sound asleep, ma'am," when we're awake all the time !

JIM. Take care, here she comes.

[*NURSE opens door with precaution, comes to beds, looks at both boys, who pretend to be sound asleep. She goes on tiptoe to door, opens it, says, "They're sound asleep, ma'am," and goes out quietly. The boys put out their heads, listen, and then sit up.*

TIM. Now the book !

JIM. Read something very nice. Then we can think about it afterwards. That will keep us awake. [They sit up.

TIM. Oh, this is the one I like—"Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross, To see a fine lady upon a white horse : Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, She shall have music wherever she goes."

JIM. Oh yes, I love that one. Let's talk about it.

TIM. What do you think a cock-horse is ?

JIM. I can't imagine. Do you think it's a horse with a cock's head ?

TIM. Oh, I wonder if he'd be like our Chanticleer, all white with a beautiful red comb.

JIM. Or perhaps he'd be like our Rooster, all black and speckly. I wonder if he'd crow all the same, as our cocks do in the morning under our windows.

TIM [*laughing*]. Oh dear, how funny Chanticleer would look with a horse's body ! or is it a cock's head and a horse's body ?

JIM [*laughing*]. You couldn't ride him so easily.

TIM. I should think it's a great big cock and wings sticking out like that [*stretching his arms*], and with a beautiful horse's back and a long tail. Oh, I should like to ride him !

JIM. So should I. [*They begin to talk sleepily.*]

TIM. And what about the fine lady ? What do you think Banbury Cross is like ?

JIM. Oh, there's the picture. Look, it's a great stone thing ; and there's the fine lady all in white, with a crown on.

TIM. I wish there was a picture of the cock-horse too.

JIM [*more sleepily*]. I should like to ride on it—and—go to see the fine lady.

TIM. Yes, we'd go to Banbury Cross and—see—her.

[*Talking more and more sleepily. The book falls out of his hand on to the floor as they both go to sleep.*]

CURTAIN

*

SCENE II.—THE DREAM

A market place. A ring of children dancing hand in hand round Banbury Cross, which stands in the middle, half way up stage. Children sing :

“ Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross
To see a fine lady upon a white horse :
Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes,
She shall have music wherever she goes.”

At the end of the tune they leave off dancing after singing it through.

*

FIRST CHILD. Oh, I'm so out of breath.

SECOND CHILD. Let's rest a little.

THIRD CHILD. Yes, till the Procession comes.

[*They all stand and sit at back.*]

FOURTH CHILD. Oh, look ! there's someone coming.

[*Enter JIMMY and TIMMY, riding cock-horses (hobby horses with cocks' heads). They gallop round Cross.*

c

TIM. There, Rooster, we've just done it. You *are* a good one to go.

JIM. So are you, Chanticleer.

FIRST CHILD. Oh, are you the beginning of the procession, please?

JIM. What procession?

CHILD. The fine lady that is coming on a white horse—the Queen of the Revels.

TIM. What are revels?

CHILD. Games and dancing and all sorts of fun.

6. RIDE A COCK HORSE.

Ride a cockhorse to Ban - bury Cross, to see a fine lady up - on a white horse,

Rings on her fingers and bells on her toes, She will make music wher - e - ver she goes.

TIM. Oh, how nice!

CHILD. Isn't it!

[*The children jump for joy and clap their hands.*

JIM [to TIM]. I am glad we came.

TIM. So am I.

CHILDREN. Hooray! Hooray! Here she comes.

[*Looking off, R. Enter the fine lady on her white horse.*

The MASTER of the Revels leads her. Two boys walk in front playing a tune on cazoos, etc. Escort of fairies, etc., if available. The Queen's horse stops at the foot of Banbury Cross—she hands a roll of paper to the MASTER, who receives it with a bow.

CROWD. Hooray ! Hooray !

MASTER. Here is the list of the Revels—the first will be a race.

JIM [to TIM]. That will be fun. I like seeing races.

MASTER. First race, Cock-horses—three times round Banbury Cross. How many entries ?

JIM [to TIM]. Do you suppose that's us ?

TIM. I don't see any others.

MASTER [loud]. Any entries ?

JIM. Cock-horse Chanticleer, ridden by Jim.

TIM. Cock-horse Rooster, ridden by Tim.

MASTER. One, two , three, off !

[*They ride round and round, crowd cheer, etc. They come in a dead heat.*]

MASTER. A dead heat—no prize.

JIM. No prize ?

MASTER. No. Don't talk. Next revel, a dance.

[*All dance, TIM and JIM and their steeds marking time.*]

MASTER. Next revel, crowing competition.

[*One after another they crow, very badly. CHANT. crows, everyone claps. Then ROOSTER crows, they clap again.*]

CHILD. That's not fair—he's a professional.

ANOTHER CHILD. Never mind ! Well done, Rooster.

[*All clap.*]

[*Scene must be changed as quickly as possible, the crowing going on uninterruptedly from the time the curtain falls until after it goes up again.*]

*

SCENE III

Same as Scene I. TIM and JIM in bed asleep—crowing going on outside. TIM sits up and rubs his eyes.

*

TIM. No, no, Rooster, leave off now. You've got the prize.

[*He sits up and rubs his eyes.*] Jim, we must ride back now.

[*Gradually more wide-awake.*] Why, that's Chanticleer crowing outside !

[*JIM also sits up.*]

JIM. What's that crowing ? Where am I ?

TIM. I've been dreaming I was riding a cock-horse.

JIM. And I dreamt I saw the fine lady. Oh, I'm so sleepy.
[They both fall back on pillow and go to sleep again.
Enter NURSE.

NURSE. What, asleep still ! Come, it's time to get up. And you've been taking a book to bed, you naughty boys, and reading it instead of going to sleep. That's why you're so tired this morning. What's it about ? Why, what absurd stuff !

Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross,
To see a fine lady upon a white horse :
With rings on her fingers, and bells on her toes,
She shall have music——

CURTAIN *falls as she reads*

LITTLE MISS MUFFET

*

NURSE and MISS MUFFET, *reading at table.*

*

MUFFET [*reading her lesson*]. C, A, T, cat ; M, A, T, mat. I've done my lessons very well to-day, haven't I ?

NURSE. Yes, Miss Muffet dear, you've been a very good little girl. Now, just read those two sentences and then we will go out.

MUFFET [*reading*]. THE CAT IS ON THE MAT. THE BAT IS ON THE MAT. Oh, I don't like that story.

NURSE [*surprised*]. Why not ?

MUFFET. About the bat. It frightens me to read about a bat on the mat. I don't like bats.

NURSE. Why, you silly little girl, they don't do you any harm.

MUFFET. They make me afraid. I can't bear bats—they're nearly as bad as spiders.

NURSE. I never saw such a foolish little child. Spiders don't do you any harm, either.

MUFFET. Oh, they're worse than bats. You won't let one come near me, nursie, will you ?

NURSE [*smiling*]. Of course not, my poppet. Now, it's time to go out. Put your things on and we'll take the baby into the grounds.

[NURSE ties on MUFFET's hat, and while she dresses her they talk.]

MUFFET. Nursie, you know that you said if I were good at my lesson I could choose my luncheon ?

NURSE. I did, yes.

MUFFET. And *do* let me take it out with me to have outside.

NURSE. Then you must have something that's easy to carry. What do you say to some nice bread and butter ?

MUFFET. No.

NURSE. Then what about a nice ginger-nut ?

MUFFET. No.

NURSE. Or a nice scone ?

MUFFET. No.

NURSE. Or a nice Albert biscuit ?

MUFFET. No.

NURSE. Then what *do* you want ?

MUFFET. Something that begins with a K.

NURSE. With a K. ? What can that be ?

MUFFET [*triumphantly*]. Curds and whey !

NURSE. Oh, my dear child, what spelling ! Curds begins with a C.

MUFFET [*decidedly*]. No, nursie, I've done my spelling for to-day. You'll let me have it outside, won't you ? Just for a treat.

NURSE. It won't be much of a treat if you spill it all on the path.

MUFFET. No, I don't want to give the path a treat, do I ? Oh, I'll be so careful, nursie, you'll see. *Do* let me.

NURSE. Very well then, just for once you may. But mind, you mustn't begin Curds with a K.

MUFFET. I'll begin it with a spoon, dear nursie—that's best. I'll go and get it from the kitchen.

NURSE. And I'll go and fetch the darling baby. Bless his pretty heart for a popsy wopsy toodelums.

*

SCENE II

The grounds—a grassy hillock—some trees. Enter the SPIDER, prowling mysteriously.

The SPIDER should have eight legs, made of thick wire, bent and covered with black. Two curving from his feet, two from his hands, two from his head (fastened on to a round frame), two from his shoulders.

*

SPIDER. Ha, none of those horrid two-legged creatures about, I am glad to say. I should be ashamed to have so few legs. Now, let me see. Where shall I start my spinning ? [*Sits on tuffet and looks round.*] That bough, I think, would be best . . . it's just the right kind of day—not too shiny, nor too damp. Just the sort of day for a fly not to see a web. [*Looks round.*] Perhaps I'd better look round and see if there's a better place. Dear me, now there's a bluebottle gone swaggering past. If I'd had the web ready he'd have blundered straight into it. Fat blue thing ! These winged creatures *are* so stupid sometimes. Well, I mustn't lose any more time. [*Goes out R.*]

[Enter NURSE, pushing pram in which the baby is supposed to be ; MUFFET following, carrying a bowl very carefully and a spoon.

NURSE. Now, Miss Muffet, you had better sit down and eat your curds and whey or you'll be splashing it down your frock. Suppose you sit on that tuffet and eat it while I walk the baby about.

MUFFET. Is that called a tuffet ? What a nice name !

NURSE. Yes, it's called a tuffet because that's where people sit to eat curds and whey.

MUFFET. Oh, I'll sit there then. [Establishes herself carefully.] Now I'll pretend I'm on a desert island, Nurse, and you go away.

NURSE [smiling]. Very well. I leave you to the savages. Good-bye.

MUFFET [calls after her]. Nurse !

NURSE. Well ?

MUFFET. You won't really go away, will you ? You'll only pretend ?

NURSE. Of course.

MUFFET. And they won't be real savages ?

NURSE. Certainly not.

MUFFET. I always think it's so much nicer to pretend.

[NURSE goes off R. MUFFET goes on eating her curds and whey. SPIDER comes in L. with coil of string. SPIDER, before seeing MUFFET, looks up at bough.

SPIDER. No, this is the best place, I'm sure.

[Sees MUFFET, who has nearly eaten her curds. She looks up and sees him, and cries out.

MUFFET. Oh ! Oh ! Oh ! Nurse ! Nurse ! Here's an enormous spider !

SPIDER. You are very rude—that's worse than being enormous.

MUFFET [looking frightened]. I'm very sorry—I didn't mean to be rude.

SPIDER [mollified]. And I didn't mean to be enormous. But I was born so.

MUFFET. Nurse ! Nurse !

[She begins crying.

Q 975707 .

SPIDER. What's the matter, little Two-legs ?

[*Sits down by her on the tuffet. Miss MUFFET puts down the curds and whey and rushes in to meet NURSE coming in L. with baby.*]

NURSE. What is it, darling ? What's the matter ?

MUFFET. Oh, Nursie, it's a spider—the biggest you ever saw, and he came and sat down beside me and frightened me away.

NURSE [*seeing SPIDER*]. Oh ! he is a monster.

7. LITTLE MISS MUFFET.

Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet eating of curds and whey. There
 came a big spider and sat down beside her, and frightened Miss Muffet a-way.

SPIDER. Really, the manners of these two-legged persons !

NURSE. I'll soon chase it away. Shoo ! Shoo ! I'll stamp upon him if I get a chance. That will teach him to be a spider.

[*SPIDER gets down off the tuffet and runs rapidly round the tree. NURSE pokes at it with her umbrella. Prolong chase ad libitum. Then SPIDER hides behind tree, looking out at intervals.*]

NURSE. There now, he's gone.

MUFFET. Oh dear, Nursie, I want to go home. I'm so frightened.

NURSE. Well, come along home then. [*Takes up bowl and pushes the pram.*] Poor little Miss Muffet !

MUFFET. I sat on a tuffet eating my curds and whey and there came that big spider . . .

[*Buries her face against her nurse.*]

NURSE. And sat down beside her and frightened Miss Muffet away ! Well, never mind, darling, he's gone into his hole, and you will never see him again.

[*They go out L. SPIDER puts his head round the tree.*]

SPIDER. Hole, indeed ! [Comes out.] No hole for me, but a nice big web where I can see what is going on. Now, where shall I begin it ? [Looks round.] Ah, there, I think ! But I'll just have a dance first—it's a great thing having so many legs for these new dances. [Dances round. At end of dance.] And now to work !

[*Throws rope over bough.*]

QUICK CURTAIN

HUMPTY DUMPTY

*

CHARACTERS

MRS. DUMPTY
KING'S MAN

MRS. PRINGLE
COLONEL
SOLDIERS *ad lib.*

HUMPTY DUMPTY
SERGEANT-MAJOR

SCENE

One side of a village street—a wall about two feet high up stage, parallel to the audience. This can be represented by anything that a child could stand on for a minute before jumping down. Behind it R.C. Mrs. Dumpty's house is seen—a little gate in the wall at back L.C. leading to house. There should be exits R., L., and C. at back through gate. MRS. DUMPTY and MRS. PRINGLE standing at gate.

*

MRS. P. Well, good morning, Mrs. Dumpty, I must be running off now.

MRS. D. Very kind of you to have come in, Mrs. Pringle. I am sorry Humpty was out, I'd like you to have seen him.

MRS. P. Oh, I can do without seeing him every day, thank you. Is he as fat as ever?

MRS. D. How you *do* go on about his being fat, Mrs. Pringle. You don't want me to starve the child, do you?

MRS. P. No, but there's a lot of difference between starving and over-feeding. I'm sure my Billy don't get the half of what you give Humpty, and just look at him!

MRS. D. Look at him, indeed! Humpty only gets the same as we get, and has done ever since he's been born. I suppose your Billy gets nothing but bread and milk.

MRS. P. He didn't have pork chops when he was six months old, if that's what you mean, Mrs. Dumpty.

MRS. D. Well, I was never one to grudge a baby a bit of anything it cried for, and no one can say Humpty's not a fine boy now.

MRS. P. He may be a fine boy, but he is a very naughty one. He makes more noise than all the rest of the boys put together. [Noise heard outside.] That sounds like him now.

MRS. D. It's just his high spirits, Mrs. Pringle. I like a boy to have a bit of spirit. [Enter HUMPTY with a great noise.

HUMPTY. Hallo, mother!

MRS. D. Don't you see Mrs. Pringle, dear?

HUMPTY. Yes, I wish I didn't. I don't like Mrs. Pringle.

MRS. D. Oh, Humpty, I'm surprised at you.

MRS. P. [offended]. I think I'd best be going, Mrs. Dumpty.

HUMPTY. Look out that you don't miss the procession, Mrs. Pringle.

MRS. D. What procession?

HUMPTY. Haven't you heard? All the King's horses and all the King's men are coming along here on their way to the Coronation.

MRS. D. Well, that's very nice. I'll take you to the end of the road, and we'll look at them.

HUMPTY. But we needn't go to the end of the road—they pass right along here. I shall only have to get on the wall and I shall see beautifully.

MRS. D. You're not to get on without me holding on to you. I'm not going to have you falling off and breaking all your bones.

MRS. P. I don't believe he's got bones to break. He is made of nothing but fat and naughtiness.

HUMPTY [boisterously]. That's right, Mrs. Pringle. Stick up for me.

MRS. P. I'm not sticking up for you, you naughty boy—I'm only sorry for your poor mother having such a son. So unlike my Billy!

MRS. D. Oh, it's only his playful way, Mrs. Pringle. Run along and wash your face, Humpty, there's a good boy.

HUMPTY. I don't want to wash my face.

MRS. D. Well, I'm sure I don't know what the King will say if he sees you with a face like that.

MRS. P. It's enough to make him abdicate.

HUMPTY. The King's not coming, you silly old things, it's his horses and men.

MRS. D. You're a rude boy, and you're to go and wash your face at once.

HUMPTY. Well, I don't mind, just for once—it's nearly a week since I last did, and it's Monday—that's the day my face goes to the wash. [Exit.

MRS. D. Hadn't you best stop and see the procession with us,

Mrs. Pringle ? It would be a nice change for you instead of looking at your Billy all day—

MRS. P. You're not very civil-spoken, Mrs. Dumpty, but I do like to see a procession when I can. But I'm hardly fit to be seen like this. I'd best slip home and put on my new shawl.

MRS. D. Well, if you do that, I'll just pop on my Sunday bonnet—it won't take a minute.

[MRS. P. *exit L.*, MRS. D. *C. at back*. *Exeunt*. *Enter HUMPTY*.]

HUMPTY. Hurrah—they've both gone—I'll get on the wall. [Climbs up.] I can see beautifully now. I expect the procession will soon be coming— Yes, I can hear them. Oh, what fun !

[Enter MRS. D.

MRS. D. Oh, you naughty boy, didn't I tell you not to get on the wall without me holding you ?

HUMPTY. I'm all right—I shall see them beautifully from here.

MRS. D. Don't jump about like that—you'll fall off for a certainty.

HUMPTY. Oh, let me alone. Can't you hear them coming ?

MRS. D. Take care, Humpty, take care. What did I say . . . !

[HUMPTY falls off—this must be done by jumping from the wall and rolling over. MRS. D. flies to pick him up. HUMPTY groans. Enter MRS. P.

MRS. P. Here I am, Mrs. Dumpty. Why, what's that down there ?

MRS. D. It's Humpty. He's been and fallen off the wall, and I can't get him up again.

MRS. P. Here, let me try. Give me your hand, Humpty.

MRS. D. No, it's no use, he is so heavy, you see.

MRS. P. Didn't I tell you he was too fat ? My Billy would be up in a minute.

MRS. D. Bother your Billy—if only someone would come and pick him up.

[Music heard. Enter the King's horses and men.

MRS. D. Oh, sirs—oh, sirs—do, pray, stop a minute.

[They walk right across the stage before they stop, so their

backs are to her—and then turn right round so that they face her.

KING'S MAN. Halt ! About turn ! Yes, ma'am ?

MRS. D. Oh, sir, you look so beautiful—but I'm sorry to tell you that my son, while waiting to see you, has fallen off the wall—he's down there.

KING'S MAN. Yes, ma'am ! I see him. Is that all, ma'am ? Good morning. About turn !— [They turn away again.

MRS. D. Oh, sirs ! Oh, sirs ! don't go away—I want you to pick him up again.

KING'S MAN. Well, ma'am, we may be late for the Coronation, but anything to oblige. [To soldiers.] About turn ! [They turn back.] First file, take hold of the boy's arms ! Second file, catch hold of his legs ! Now—all together, on to the wall—lift ! [They try to pick him up.] I'm sorry, ma'am. We can't move him—he's rather stout, you see.

MRS. P. What did I say ! If only it was my Billy now.

[More music heard.

KING'S MAN. Here's another regiment coming—perhaps they can do it. [Enter more soldiers.

KING'S MAN. If you please, Colonel—

COLONEL. Halt ! What is it, my man ?

KING'S MAN. There's a young feller there fallen off the wall—we can't get him up again, sir.

COLONEL. What ! All you King's horses and all you King's men can't do a simple thing like that ! Preposterous ! Ridiculous ! [He twirls his moustache and is very warlike.] Sergeant-Major !

SERGEANT-MAJOR. Yes, Colonel !

COLONEL. Fall out the regiment, and replace that boy on the wall.

SERGEANT-MAJOR. Right turn ! Dismiss ! Now then, all together.

[Both regiments dash at HUMPTY and try to pick him up.

COLONEL. H'm—it's not so easy as I thought. A charge of cavalry might do it. [HUMPTY starts.] Or, upon my word, an explosion of dynamite would be better. Sergeant-Major !

[HUMPTY trembles.

SERGEANT-MAJOR. Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL. Blow this boy off the ground with dynamite.

MRS. D. [hurriedly]. Oh, thank you so much—I won't trouble you to do that.

COLONEL. No trouble at all, madam, I assure you. It won't take a moment. Sergeant-Major!

MRS. P. Oh, how exciting!

MRS. D. Be quiet, Mrs. Pringle. *Pray* don't trouble, Colonel—I think he is very comfortable where he is, thank you.

8. HUMPTY DUMPTY.

The musical score for 'Humpty Dumpty' consists of two staves of music. The top staff is in G major and the bottom staff is in C major. The lyrics are integrated into the music as follows:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

All the King's horses and all the King's men, could'n't pick Humpty Dumpty up again.

COLONEL. Just as you wish, madam—but if we can't do anything for you I think we had better be moving on. Sergeant-Major!

SERGEANT-MAJOR. Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL. Fall in the regiment.

SERGEANT-MAJOR. Regiment! Fall in!

[They fall in and stand at ease.]

COLONEL. Attention! Right turn. Quick march!

[Exeunt]

MRS. D. What a dreadful man!

MRS. P. Oh, did you think so? I thought him so pleasant.

MRS. D. Why, what's Humpty doing?

[HUMPTY rolls over and faces the audience.]

HUMPTY. Phew ! I felt rather anxious then—I thought I should have to get up—

MRS. D. Get up ! But can you get up, my poppet ?

[HUMPTY *sits up*.

HUMPTY. Of course I can, if I like—only it was such fun having them all crowding round and pulling at me.

MRS. P. Well, I never ! It would have served you quite right if they had blown you up as they said.

MRS. D. How hard you are on the poor child, Mrs. Pringle.

MRS. P. My Billy would never have done such a thing.

HUMPTY. Of course he wouldn't—he's much too stupid.

MRS. P. Stupid ! Not he—he's got too much sense to go falling off a wall just when a procession was coming. I shall go home and tell him what you did.

HUMPTY. And mind you tell him that all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't pick Humpty Dumpty up again—till he chose !

[*Gets up*.]

CURTAIN

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CHILDREN'S ROOMS

2

